

# FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
 MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

**Town/City:** Amherst

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*): Amherst

## Photograph



**Address:** 31 Paige Street

**Historic Name:** The Rose Wetherbee House

**Uses:** Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

**Date of Construction:** 1887-8

**Source:** Amherst Directory 1888-89

**Style/Form:** Farmhouse

**Architect/Builder:** developer, Frank E. Paige

### Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick with fieldstone likely below ground

Wall/Trim: Clapboard

Roof: Gable/Hip; Slate

### Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Fireplace

### Major Alterations (*with dates*):

N/A

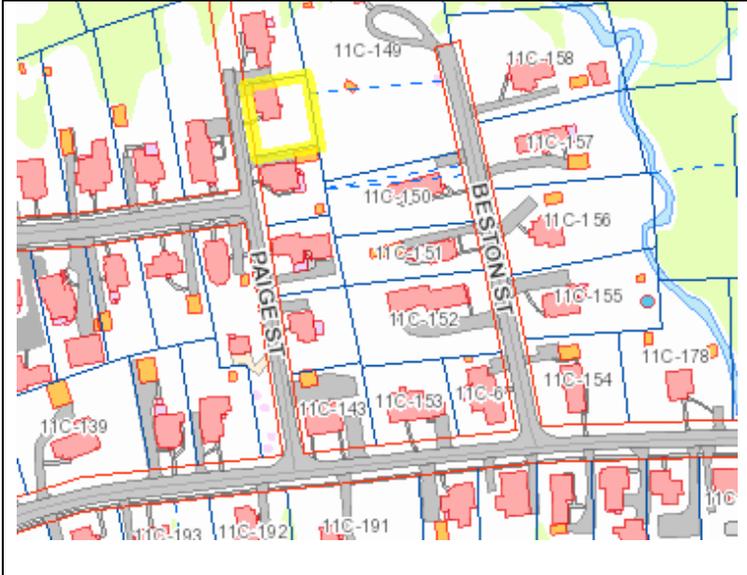
**Condition:** Good

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.19

**Setting:** Residential

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** L. Romag, M. Adams, E. Wilfert

**Organization:** Lincoln-Sunset Historic District

**Date** (*month / year*): November 2015; April-May 2016

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

31 PAIGE ST

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

E	AMH.
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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

*Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

The house at 31 Paige Street is a small, simple, 19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular farmhouse built, like many others in the neighborhood, to house working class families. It has changed little from its original configuration. The main façade of the house contains three bays with the front entrance in the first bay to the right, and a window in each of the other two bays; non-aligned windows are on the second floor. There appears to be a ventilation opening to the attic above the second floor. This is the vernacular farmhouse typical on Paige, Beston and McClellan Streets and other of the older streets and houses throughout this neighborhood.

The house features an added garage on its left side (probably built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century). There is also a one-story extension on the home's right (southern) side, which can be seen in the 1910 Sanborn map, featuring a shallow porch with turned posts and decorative brackets. Fireplace added in 1984, large chimney on left may reflect this addition (a second, possibly original, chimney appears at the center of the building).

The Assessors' card shows the approximate age of the house at 1920—one of the dates used as a 'default' choice when no better information had been available for similar houses. A review of the historical information, however, shows at least the main house to be considerably older, having been built by 1890.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

Frank E. Paige bought an empty 1 1/4 acre lot on the north side of McClellan Street in October 1886 together with his father, Theodore L. Paige, proprietor of Paige's Livery [405/72]. The son Frank bought out his father's interest [406/216] on January 1, 1887 and between 1887-1892 developed five house lots, the street and a double-house on an adjacent lot facing McClellan Street at #65-67. The street existed in 1889, was called Paige Street by April 1896, and accepted as a Town way in 1942. The 1889 date suggests it was named after Frank E. Paige, and not Professor James B. Paige who resided nearby and is credited by James Smith's *Record* (p. 68).

A common practice on other streets in this neighborhood was for significant downtown employers to develop a row of small, inexpensive homes and rent them out to their employees. Theodore L. Paige's Livery Stable was a significant local employer, a stable and carriage service attached to and associated with an even more significant downtown hotel operation, the Amherst House.

John A. Wetherbee came to Amherst sometime after 1879. In the 1886-87 Amherst directory he is listed as a hostler (a groom or stableman) for T.L. Paige's Amherst House Livery Stable. John residence in 1886-1887 is shown as being on Pleasant Street at the corner of Triangle Street. Wetherbee had been born in Ware, MA in 1849, but lived from the age of 10 in Greenwich, further north up the Swift River. His father Erastus W. Wetherbee was a millworker (wool spinner) from Ware, and his mother was Adaline Green. He had two siblings,

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E	AMH.
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Henry and William. The family appears in Ware on the 1850 and 1855 U.S. censuses. But something happened to the Wetherbee family between 1855 and 1860, probably the death of wife and mother Adaline.

On the 1860 U.S. census, John is shown as living by himself in Greenwich, MA, at age 11, with the Roots, a large farm family. None of his siblings were with him. His father Erastus was still in Ware, but with a new wife Caroline and her daughter by a previous marriage. John's new home, Greenwich, was one of the Swift River Valley towns removed in the 1930s to make way for the Quabbin Reservoir. In 1865, at age 16, John was still living in Greenwich, but he was by then residing with a cluster of Fuller family members (most of them from Connecticut), working as a farmer and serving as a caretaker for 72 year old Sarah Fuller.

In 1870, John was living in Enfield, MA, which abutted Greenwich on the southeast side, and was due south of Prescott, MA. He was 21 and had married to Angeline Lamson in May 1869. They had a 10 month old son Charles Henry in 1870. They had a second son, William Erastus, in May 1872. Angeline died of typhoid fever in September 1872. By 1874, at age 25, John had met and married Rosetter Griffin (born in Pelham) at a ceremony in Shutesbury, and was working as a farmer in Leverett, having learned the trade from the Roots and Fullers.

There may have been some connection between John Wetherbee and Theodore L. Paige during John's childhood and early adulthood in the Swift River Valley. Theodore L. Paige was born (1841) and later married (1863) and raised children in Prescott, MA, another of the towns removed to make way for the Quabbin Reservoir. Prescott was centrally located with respect to the other Swift River Valley towns associated with Wetherbee. The extended Paige family lived in a cluster around the center of Prescott P.O. (Post Office), and one of them ran E. J. Paige's Boarding House in the village center. Theodore's father Francis B. Paige owned a farm just south and east of the center, and it was there that Theodore grew up and lived well into his adult life.

Theodore Paige was in Amherst by 1880, when he is listed as working as a "teamster." In 1883, Theodore Paige purchased the livery stable just west of the Amherst House (now part of the Amherst Cinema building) from its previous proprietor, William Stebbins. By the mid-1880s when John Wetherbee moved to Amherst, Theodore was already here and needed people (like former farmers) with experience with horses for his livery stable.

In the 1889-90 Amherst directory, John Wetherbee is listed as a "teamster" (no place of employment indicated) whose home was on Paige Street. An 1888 or 1889 deed [449/31-32] shows Frank E. Paige selling Rose E. Wetherbee the property "with the buildings therein . . . to be held by her as a homestead." That same year, for the first time, "John A. Wetherbee & wife" were taxed for a house (valued at \$550) and house lot (1/4 acre valued at \$125) on Paige Street. This establishes the approximate year of construction of the house at 31 Paige Street as being between 1888 and 1889, and indicates that Frank Paige built houses 'on spec', with the intent of selling or renting completed residences.

The Wetherbees would own and live in the Paige Street house for 72 years.

In the 1892-93 Amherst directory John A. Wetherbee is again listed as a hostler for T.L. Paige's Amherst House Livery Stable. John was living on Paige Street—no street number was provided in 1893. John's son Dwight Edward Wetherbee was working as a porter at the Amherst House, and living there as well. In the 1895 Amherst directory John A. Wetherbee is again listed as a hostler for the T.L. Paige Livery Stable and is noted as having his "house [at the] foot [of] Paige" Street. "Foot" means the end of, so this likely indicated the presence of the house at 31 Paige Street—located almost at the north (downhill) end of Paige Street, on the east side—at least by 1895, and probably by 1893. It also suggests that the house now to the north of 31 Paige (44 Paige) had not as yet been built.

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E	AMH.
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The 1898 Amherst directory identifies John A. Wetherbee working as a night watchman for the T.L. Paige livery, with his home at 17 Paige Street. Shifting from being a hostler who handled horses to keeping watch at night involved much less physical effort. John was 48 years old. Perhaps he had been injured handling the horses; it was a dangerous occupation. John would hold the position of night watchman for T.L. Paige Livery Stable until 1910—for the rest of his life. It appears as his occupation on his death certificate.

The 1898 Amherst directory also lists a street address for the house for the first time—17 Paige Street. Thirty-nine years later (1937), when Amherst converted to a new street address numbering system to accommodate all the new homes, 17 Paige Street became 31 Paige Street, verifying that John Wetherbee’s house was indeed the current home at 31 Paige Street.

The period when the Wetherbee house was built (1890-1893) occurs during a gap in Amherst’s map-making. The closest map in time prior to construction of the house was the 1886 Burleigh perspective, on which Paige Street does not appear. The Sanborn fire maps for Amherst begin in 1887, and were done for 1892, 1896, and 1902, but they only show buildings in the center of town or various factories. They do not go as far north as Paige Street.

The 1910 Sanborn fire map is the first to include this neighborhood, and it shows the Wetherbee home at the end of Paige Street, with a small ell leading off the main house to the south, parallel to the street. The house has the same configuration on the 1916, 1930, and 1950 fire maps.

John A. Wetherbee died on August 31, 1910, at the Dickinson Hospital in Northampton, from complications (“surgical shock, pneumonia”) following an operation to repair a strangulated hernia. He was 60 years old. He was buried in Wildwood Cemetery. John’s widow Rose inherited the house at 17 Paige Street.

In the 1911 Amherst directory, Rose E. Wetherbee is shown as the owner. Son Vernon O. Wetherbee (alternately referred to as Vernie, Virnie, and Bernie in the records) was boarding at home while working for the Amherst Laundry Company. Daughter Elizabeth, a student, was living there, too.

In the 1923 street directory, Rose is still shown as the owner of 17 Paige Street. Son Vernon O. was boarding there, now working for the Amherst Gas Company. Daughter Elizabeth is shown as still boarding at the house, but now working for the Amherst Laundry Company.

In 1930, Rose conveyed the house at 17 Paige Street to Vernon with a life estate enabling her to continue to live there for the rest of her life [869/195]. Daughter Elizabeth had married Fred Waltz, and in 1930, they, too, were living in the house at 17 Paige Street. Fred Waltz’s father had taken his family out of Germany, but Fred was born in Ireland before the family emigrated to the U.S. In 1920, the Waltz family (father John W. Waltz, son Fred, and a daughter) had been living in Northampton. Fred was a hod carrier for local building contractors, a skilled occupation associated with bricklaying and masonry work.

Rosetter Wetherbee died in 1932, and was buried in Wildwood Cemetery with John. In the 1937 street lists, Vernon and Elizabeth (now Waltz) were the only occupants of the house, with Vernon’s occupation listed as engineer. Vernon Wetherbee died in 1965. He is buried with his parents in Wildwood Cemetery, and his first name appears as “Virnie” on their shared headstone.

In August 1965, Elizabeth (once again using her maiden name of Wetherbee), who was living in Springfield and acting as administrator for Vernon’s estate, sold the house to Roy Industries (1468/656). Roy Industries sold the house to Kathleen Swaim in 1969 (1548/266) a member of the University of Massachusetts English Department, living a few doors away from colleagues Margaret O’Brien (25 Paige) and Margo Culley (11 Paige). Kathleen Swaim made extensive renovations and interior improvements to the house, then sold it to Randall Knoper, also of the

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E	AMH.
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University of Massachusetts English Department in 1999 (5789/0328). Mr. Knoper married Janis Greve and they are the current owners.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

<http://gis.amherstma.gov/images/cards/1041.pdf>

Amherst Directory of Residents  
Deeds  
Tax records  
Amherst Vital Statistics